

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN
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AF/P - MRS. RUSSELL
IO/P - MR. BLACHLY
EUR/P - MR. SAVAGE
NEA/ARN - MR. KORN (INFO)
H - MISS FOLGER

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R 232212Z AUG 74
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ROME
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AMEMBASSY SANAA
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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING AUGUST 23, 1974:

QUOTE:

Q. BOB, EXCUSE ME, BUT SOME OF US WERE INTERESTED YESTER-
DAY IN WHETHER GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER WAS SIMPLY SIGHTSEEING
HERE YESTERDAY, OR WHETHER HE WAS BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE
DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST. HE WAS HERE SPECIFI-
CALLY WHEN MINISTER KHADDAM WAS HERE. CAN YOU TELL US IF
HE -- YOU KNOW -- MERELY "SHOOK HANDS" OR DID HE SIT IN
AS A LISTENER -- OR EVEN AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE DIS-
CUSSIONS?
AND IF HE DID, IS THAT PRACTICE GOING TO BE CONTINUED?

A. ON YOUR LAST QUESTION, I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THE
GOVERNOR WILL HAVE ANY FURTHER PLANS TO COME DOWN AND HAVE
A CHANCE TO MEET CERTAIN RANKING FOREIGN OFFICIALS THAT
COME OVER HERE. ...

INSOFAR AS THE CHANCE HE HAD YESTERDAY TO MEET WITH THE
FOREIGN MINISTER OF SYRIA -- I JUST REFER BACK TO EXACTLY
WHAT I SAID YESTERDAY ON THAT. I JUST DON'T HAVE ANY-
THING MORE ON IT.

Q. WELL YESTERDAY, THE MEETING HADN'T TAKEN PLACE, SO IT
WAS, OF COURSE, QUITE REASONABLE THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT ROLE HE WOULD PLAY.
NOW THAT THEY HAVE HAD THE MEETING, I AM ASKING REALLY --

Q. THIS IS THE QUESTION: DID HE PARTICIPATE IN THE MEET-
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ING? -
SOME PEOPLE QUESTIONED THAT -- SOMEONE THAT DOESN'T --
WELL, YOU KNOW THE REASON FOR THE QUESTION, IT'S PRETTY
OBVIOUS --
WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF SUCH A MEETING?

A. I WOULD LEAVE IT WHERE IT WAS YESTERDAY. THE SEC-
RETARY THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR
THE GOVERNOR, FOR GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER TO HAVE AN OPPOR-
TUNITY TO MEET THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF SYRIA. THERE WAS
A MEETING OF -- I BELIEVE IT WAS ABOUT 35 OR 40 MINUTES,
AND GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER WAS THERE WITH THE SECRETARY.

Q. FOR THE LENGTH OF THE MEETING?

A. YES, HE WAS THERE.

Q. OH?

A. BUT I DO NOT KNOW THE SUBSTANCE OF IT AND JUST EX-
ACTLY WHAT GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER'S ROLE WAS. BUT HE DID
HAVE A CHANCE TO MEET THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

Q. WELL, YOU DO REALIZE THE IMPLICATIONS OF A SITUATION
LIKE THIS. WE ALL KNOW THAT THE GOVERNOR IS A FINE MAN
AND IS UNDOUBTEDLY VERY SECURE.
BUT IT WOULD BE A PRECEDENT WHICH MIGHT HAVE A BAD ANTE-
CEDENT SOMETIME, OR HAVE SUBSEQUENT EFFECTS SOMETIME IF
PRIVATE CITIZENS (WHICH IS STILL HIS CLASSIFICATION)
WERE PERMITTED TO SIT IN DURING NEGOTIATIONS.
AND, YOU KNOW, IT JUST SEEMED TO ME THE SECRETARY MIGHT
LIKE TO CLEAR THIS UP, BECAUSE IT'S AN UNUSUAL WAY
OF OPERATING.

A. WELL JUST ONE THING FOR THE RECORD HERE, SO THAT IT
IS CLEAR ON WHAT I SAID: I DID NOT CHARACTERIZE THE
MEETING LAST EVENING AS A "NEGOTIATING" MEETING. I AM
UNABLE TO GIVE YOU THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MEETING, I WAS
NOT PRESENT.
BUT JUST FOR THE RECORD, I DID NOT SAY THAT IT WAS A
NEGOTIATING MEETING.
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Q. WELL, WHATEVER IT IS -- YOU SEE, WE DON'T KNOW BE-
CAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW -- OR IF YOU DO, YOU ARE NOT PER-
MITTED TO TELL US.

A. I DON'T KNOW.

Q. SO JUST FOR THE RECORD, I THINK THAT VIRTUOSITY HAS
ITS MERITS, BUT I THINK THAT ONE SHOULD KEEP THE RECORD
STRAIGHT.

A. YES, I AGREE.

Q. CAN YOU GIVE US ANY CONSENSUS OF WHAT IS BEING TALKED
ABOUT ON SYRIA, OR WHAT WENT ON AT THE WHITE HOUSE, THIS
MORNING IN PARTICULAR?

A. WELL ON THE WHITE HOUSE MEETING, I HAVE TO REFER
YOU TO WHAT JERRY TERHORST SAID. HE GAVE THE SUBSTANCE
OF THAT MEETING OVER THERE. I DO NOT HAVE IT WITH ME
HERE. BUT HE GAVE IT OUT ABOUT FORTY-FIVE MINUTES AGO.

Q. WHAT IS THE PLANNED SEQUENCE OF DISCUSSIONS AND THE

CULMINATION OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER?

A. WELL THIS IS -- AS WE HAVE SAID MANY TIMES, THIS IS ONE OF A SERIES OF EXPLORATORY DISCUSSIONS THAT THE SECRETARY IS HAVING WITH THE PARTIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAT ARE INVOLVED IN TRYING TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. AND THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PARTIES.

I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANY FUTURE TIMETABLE, OTHER THAN THE SAUDI ARABIAN FOREIGN MINISTER WHO WILL BE COMING HERE NEXT WEEK. I'LL GIVE YOU THE DETAILS ON THAT AS SOON AS I HAVE THEM.

A. -- AND THEN, AS THE SECRETARY SAID ON MONDAY, WE ARE

LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER IN SEPTEMBER.

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Q. WELL, WILL THERE BE A STATEMENT ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE AMERICAN-SYRIAN TALKS?

A. I'LL HAVE TO CHECK THAT, AND I'LL TRY TO GET YOU WORD ON THAT.

Q. IF THERE IS, WHEN WOULD THAT BE?

A. I'LL FIND OUT RIGHT AFTER I LEAVE HERE.

Q. ARE THEY EXPECTED TO MEET AGAIN TOMORROW OR NEXT WEEK?

A. TO MY KNOWLEDGE, NO. I BELIEVE I ANNOUNCED THREE OR FOUR DAYS AGO, THAT THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, I THINK, IS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE ON THE 24TH.

Q. ARE SYRIA AND THE UNITED STATES IN AGREEMENT ON WHAT THE NEXT STAGE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE GOING TO BE?

A. I DON'T -- HERE AGAIN, DICK, AS WE HAVE SAID WITH ALL OF THESE CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE EXPLORATORY AND PRELIMINARY -- WE DON'T WANT TO GET INTO THE SUBSTANCE OF ANY OF THEM AT THIS TIME.

THE SECRETARY IS SEEKING VIEWS OF ALL THE PARTIES. AT THIS TIME I WOULD RATHER JUST LEAVE IT THERE.

Q. BOB, DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY FEELING ABOUT THE FACT THAT QUINETRA -- THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT QUINETRA IS BEING REBUILT BY THE SYRIANS AT THIS POINT? DID THEY DRAW ANY IMPLICATIONS FROM THAT? FOR INSTANCE --

A. I SAW THE REPORT, AND FRANKLY, I HAVEN'T LOOKED INTO IT TO SEE WHETHER IT'S ACCURATE AND --

Q. DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE STATUS OF QUINETRA? IS IT BEING REBUILT --

A. I CANNOT GIVE IT TO YOU HERE AT THIS TIME.

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Q. BOB, DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY INDEPENDENT REPORTS ON THE SYRIAN ARMED FORCES BEING PUT ON ALERT? YOU KNOW THERE WERE PUBLISHED REPORTS TO THAT EFFECT.

A. WELL, WE'VE SEEN THE REPORTS, TED, AND I DON'T REALLY WANT TO COMMENT ON IT EXCEPT TO SAY THIS HERE, THAT THREATS LIKE THIS AND COUNTERTHREATS, YOU KNOW, COULD IN TIME BE A PROBLEM OBVIOUSLY.

Q. WHO'S THREATENING, AND WHAT ARE THE COUNTERTHREATS, BOB?

A. WELL, IF YOU HAVE REPORTS THAT FORCES ARE GOING ON ALERT AND THEN THE OTHER SIDE MAY CALL AN ALERT OR HAVE AN EXERCISE OR SOMETHING, AND IT JUST SORT OF CREATES MORE TENSION WHICH OBVIOUSLY IS NOT CONDUCIVE TO THE NEGOTIATION OF A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN THE AREA. THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SAY ON THIS,

Q. ARE YOU SAYING, BOB, IT IS LOOSE TALK, THERE IS NO SUBSTANCE. IS THIS SORT OF THE "SLIP OF THE LIP WILL SLIP A SHIP" TYPE OF TALK?

A. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING.

Q. NO, NO, IS IT LOOSE TALK, OR DO WE KNOW, ARE THE SYRIANS PUTTING UP FORCES. YOU'VE BEEN ASKED FOR A MONTH NOW ABOUT SOVIET SHIPMENTS TO SYRIA, ABOUT WHETHER SYRIA IS OBSERVING THE TRUCE, AND NOW ABOUT THIS, AND I JUST WONDER IF YOU MEAN TO CHARACTERIZE IT THE WAY IT SOUNDS. IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S LOOSE TALK AND DOESN'T DO ANYBODY ANY GOOD. I MEAN AS IF YOU'RE SAYING LOOSE TALK IS NOT CONDUCIVE TO PEACE, WHICH IS TRUE, BUT IS THERE A REAL SITUATION THERE?

A. WELL, LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY. WE'VE SEEN THE REPORT THAT THESE SYRIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE GONE ON ALERT. AND THE REPORT ITSELF GOES ALL OVER THE WORLD, AND THIS TYPE OF REPORT -- I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THE SYRIAN FORCES HAVE GONE ON ALERT OR NOT, BUT THERE IS A REPORT TO THAT EFFECT AND OBVIOUSLY SOME PEOPLE MAY IN-

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TERPRET IT AS A THREAT AND THEN OTHER PEOPLE MAY HAVE A COUNTERTHREAT, AND THIS KIND OF A SITUATION JUST ISN'T CONDUCIVE TO TRYING TO HAVE AN ATMOSPHERE THAT WILL LEAD TOWARD A PEACEFUL NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.

Q. CAN WE ASSUME THE SECRETARY IS GOING TO RAISE THIS WITH THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SINCE HE'S SEEING HIM TODAY?

A. CAN YOU ASSUME THIS?

Q. YES, I MEAN IS IT A PROPER ASSUMPTION THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE HEARING ABOUT A REPORT OF SYRIAN ARMED FORCES GOING ON ALERT, AND SINCE THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER IS HERE, THAT HE WOULD LOGICALLY ASK HIM ABOUT IT?

A. I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE THE ASSUMPTION.

Q. WELL, CAN YOU CHECK ON WHETHER THIS HAS COME UP IN THE DISCUSSION?

A. HE'S SUPPOSED TO SEE HIM THIS AFTERNOON, AND THEN HE WAS OVER WITH THE PRESIDENT HIS MORNING.

Q. WELL, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK, THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BEING HERE, WHY WOULD THE SECRETARY OF STATE NOT ASK HIM ABOUT THE REPORTS?

A. I'M NOT SAYING THAT HE WOULDN'T ASK HIM. I JUST DON'T KNOW.

Q. ALSO, COULD YOU TAKE THE QUESTION ABOUT WHAT THE STATUS OF QUINETRA IS, BECAUSE IT WAS OUR UNDERSTANDING AT THE TIME OF THE NEGOTIATION THAT PART OF THE SETTLEMENT WAS THAT QUINETRA WOULD BE REPOPULATED AND REBUILT.

A. LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN FIND OUT ABOUT IT.

Q. BOB, CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THAT I ASKED YESTERDAY OR COMMENT ON OUR POSITION WITH REGARD TO THE UNCLASSIFIED

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SITUATION IN SYRIA INTERNALLY IN REGARD TO THE JEWISH MINORITY?

A. I'LL MAKE ON COMMENT, JOE, ON THIS. AND THIS COMMENT REALLY IS THE SAME COMMENT THAT WE HAVE BEEN MAKING CONSISTENTLY WITH REGARD TO THE QUESTION OF THE EMI-

GRATION OF JEWS FROM THE SOVIET UNION, THAT WE DO NOT WANT TO DISCUSS ANY DISCUSSIONS WE MAY BE HAVING ON THIS SUBJECT. AND YOU CAN COMBINE THAT WITH THE GENERAL STATEMENT THAT I GAVE YOU YESTERDAY AT THE END OF YOUR BRIEF QUESTION ON THE FACT THAT OBVIOUSLY INSOFAR AS PERSECUTION IS CONCERNED ANYWHERE OBVIOUSLY WE'RE AGAINST IT. AND I WOULD JUST LIKE TO LEAVE IT THERE.

Q. BOB, CAN WE INFER FROM THAT STATEMENT THAT THERE ARE, IN FACT, DISCUSSIONS NOW IN PROGRESS ON THAT SUBJECT?

A. I DON'T WANT TO BE ANY MORE PRECISE THAN I HAVE BEEN THERE WITH REGARD TO ANY OF THE SPECIFIC SUBJECTS THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE BEING DISCUSSED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF SYRIA.

Q. DO I UNDERSTAND CORRECTLY THAT THE SECRETARY TOLD NEWSMEN NOT TO QUESTION THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER YESTERDAY?

A. WHAT? NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A THING.

Q. THAT'S WHAT I UNDERSTAND. THERE WAS A REPORT TO THE EFFECT THAT THE SECRETARY ASKED NEWSMEN NOT TO QUESTION THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER.

A. WHY DON'T YOU ASK THE NEWSMEN? I DON'T KNOW.

Q. WELL, I WAS ASKING WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS TRUE. THEY ATTRIBUTE THIS TO THE SECRETARY.

A. AND THAT HE ALLEGEDLY ASKED NEWSMEN NOT TO TALK TO THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER?

Q. NOT TO TALK; NOT TO QUESTION.
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A. I NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A THING.

Q. BOB, IF I MAY, SINCE I WAS THE ONE ASKING THE QUESTION, THE SECRETARY SAID THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER WANTED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.

A. YOU GOT YOUR ANSWER. I WAS UNAWARE.

Q. HAS THE DEPARTMENT RECEIVED ANY FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE \$400 MILLION OFFER TO PORTUGAL?

A. YES, I WISH I HAD THE TICKER HERE.

Q. NO, HAS THE DEPARTMENT RECEIVED ANY INFORMATION?

A. I'VE SEEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT YESTERDAY THAT THERE'S NOTHING TO THIS. THAT'S ALL I --

Q. CAN I CHANGE THE --

Q. JUST A MINUTE. DOES THAT NOW, AS FAR AS THE DEPARTMENT IS CONCERNED, CLOSE THE BOOK ON THIS?

A. I HAVE NO MORE TO SAY ON THE SUBJECT.

Q. BOB, YOU'RE REALLY IN KIND OF A CURIOUS POSITION HERE BECAUSE, ON THE ONE HAND, AT TIMES WHEN WE REFER TO TICKER ITEMS YOU SAY YOU DON'T WANT TO COMMENT ON PUBLISHED REPORTS; AND NOW YOU SEEM TO BE IN THE POSTURE OF TAKING THE PUBLISHED REPORTS AND SAYING THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS THEREFORE SATISFIED THAT IT HAS AN ANSWER. DON'T YOU HAVE ANY --

A. LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY, TED. I HAVE NOT CHECKED THE PORTUGUESE DESK THIS MORNING TO SEE IF THEY HAVE SENT IN ANY REPORT CONFIRMING THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PORTUGUESE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN LISBON YESTERDAY. I'LL BE GLAD TO CHECK THAT, AND THEN I'LL POST IT.

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Q. WELL, MAY I JUST ASK, SINCE THIS SUBJECT WAS THE OBJECT OF A LENGTHY DISCUSSION YESTERDAY, WHY YOU DID NOT CHECK THIS MORNING?

A. BECAUSE THERE WERE A NUMBER OF OTHER SUBJECTS THAT I FELT WERE OF HIGHER PRIORITY BECAUSE I DID NOT CONSIDER THIS A REAL TOP PRIORITY ACTION MATTER IN VIEW OF THE STATEMENT OF THE PORTUGUESE FOREIGN MINISTRY. THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T.

Q. BOB, CAN I COUPLE SOMETHING WITH THAT, SINCE YOU ARE GOING TO LOOK INTO IT?

A. SURE.

Q. I THOUGHT THE SITUATION WAS THAT WE WOULD HEAR FROM OUR EMBASSY, OR YOU WOULD HEAR FROM YOUR EMBASSY, IN LISBON ON THE SITUATION. SO EVEN THOUGH THERE HAS BEEN A PORTUGUESE DENIAL, I'M INTERESTED IN WHETHER THE UNITED STATES CAN CONFIRM THAT SUCH AN OFFER WAS MADE, WHETHER OR NOT SUCH AN OFFER WAS MADE.

A. NO COMMENT.

Q. IS THAT THE END OF THE SEARCH? NO, I'M SAYING

PORTUGAL -- THIS IS SO OBVIOUS -- PORTUGAL CAN DENY IT
?OR THEIR OWN GOOD REASONS, AND IT COULD BE A VALID OFFER.

NOW, THE UNITED STATES HAS REPORTING SERVICES, AND I
WONDER IF WE CAN FIND OUT FROM AMERICAN SOURCES.

A. BARRY, ON THIS I REALLY AM NOT GOING TO HAVE MUCH
MORE TO SAY. WE ARE EXPECTING THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE
RENEWAL OF THE AZORES BASE AGREEMENT TO BEGIN, I BELIEVE
IT'S SEPTEMBER 3. THIS IS ON THE SCHEDULE. WE HAVE
EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BEGIN AT
THAT TIME.

Q. WILL THEY BE MORE EXPENSIVE BECAUSE OF THIS OFFER?

A. I DO NOT KNOW. I WAS ASKED THIS YESTERDAY. I'M NOT
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GOING TO CHARACTERIZE WHAT EACH SIDE MAY PUT UP WITH
NEGOTIATIONS THAT HAVEN'T EVEN BEGUN YET.

Q. IS THERE A MEETING PLANNED BETWEEN THE SECRETARY AND
THE ISRAELIS DURING THE NEXT 24 OR 48 HOURS. IS THERE
A MEETING WITH THE ISRAELIS OR THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR?

A. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THERE IS ANY APPOINTMENT
SCHEDULED WITH THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR NOW OR NOT. TO
MY KNOWLEDGE THERE ISN'T. I HAVEN'T SEEN IT ON ANY
SCHEDULE THUS FAR.

Q. THANK YOU, ROBERT.

A. OKAY, THANK YOU. END QUOTE. KISSINGER

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